



Downingtown Area Historical Society **Hist-O-Gram**

Interesting local history, accessed from our archives

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Where and What Is This?



The first person to correctly identify the site of this photo will be recognized as a truly perceptive scholar. Please send your identification entries to:

Info@downingtownareahistoricalociety.org.

Did the Lincoln Funeral Train stop at Downingtown?

By Jim Sundman

Just before 3 PM on Saturday, April 22, 1865, the funeral train of Abraham Lincoln made a stop right here in Downingtown. This event has long been a source of pride for our community, especially since the “Lincoln Special” made few stops at small towns like Downingtown along its 13-day, nearly 1,700 mile journey from Washington, DC to the President’s final resting place in Springfield, IL. The train generally made scheduled stops only at larger towns and cities where public and private viewings were held.

Why did the Special stop in Downingtown? One account is that the funeral party stopped to eat at the Pennsylvania House and during the stop the honor guard accompanying the casket of the President drilled on Lancaster Avenue. Another account is that the train made a special stop at Glen Isle Farm about a half mile west of the depot so the McIlvaine family could personally pay their respects to the deceased president (Abraham McIlvaine, who died in 1863, was a friend of Lincoln's from the days they served together in the U.S. House of Representatives).

But neither story is mentioned in contemporary accounts. In fact, what is written contradicts them. The train stopped in Downingtown was for a much simpler reason: the water in the locomotive needed to be topped-off and the tender re-filled with wood. The Special left Harrisburg nearly four hours before and required refueling in order to continue into Philadelphia. Downingtown had the facilities to do this and was accomplished in a very short time before the train continued east. "On we ran rapidly to Downingtown," a correspondent for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote from the train, "where we waited five minutes for wood and water."

Four years earlier, the train bringing President-Elect Lincoln to Washington stopped in Downingtown for the same reason. "In Downingtown, we stopped for wood and water," a writer noted on February 21, 1861. The brief stop allowed Lincoln to say a few words to the large crowd that had gathered, but as soon as the train finished refueling, it continued on to Harrisburg.

In 1865, the Special was on an even tighter schedule. In fact, the train's schedule was so tight that even a slight delay at Elizabethtown was noted by another writer due to a "rush over the wood-piles by men, women, and children to see the funeral car." At Lancaster, still another reporter wrote, "the train stopped for so short a period of time, and as the hour is late, it is impossible to give a full description of the [funeral] car in detail." Newspaper accounts of the day are filled with such details of the train's passage, and if the Special stopped in Downingtown so the funeral party could have dinner, or an exclusive stop was made for a private family, it no doubt would have been mentioned.

Still, the short stop in Downingtown of the Lincoln Special was a once-in-a-lifetime event and was certainly never forgotten by those who witnessed it. Unlike at Parkesburg, where a half hour before stopping at Downingtown, "the train ran so swiftly by that there was barely time for them to catch a glimpse of the funeral car," according to the *Inquirer*.

Downingtown residents were more fortunate. The train came to a stop where the crowd "quietly gathered around the rear of the train, and stood with their heads uncovered" until it departed, noted an *Inquirer* reporter.

Jim Sundman has lived with his wife and five girls in the Johnsontown section of Downingtown for 13 years, where he has been (slowly) restoring his 1875 house. He has worked for Amtrak for nearly 17 years in the Market Research and Analysis Department. Sunman, who has a "strong personal interest in history and genealogy," has authored several published articles, including one on the history of Johnsontown (See <http://downingtowntodoes.com/2012/07/01/how-johnsontown-got-its-name/>) as well as several on the 13th New Jersey Regiment, which fought in the Civil War.

Downingtown area news in July 1945

The following items were published in local newspapers 68 years ago.

Although the war in the Pacific was winding down and Japan would surrender in several weeks, recruits were still being inducted by the **Downingtown Selective Service Board**. Those who joined the Army in July 1945 included: Paul Brinton, Frank Marco, Henry Seiders, Frank DiOttavio, and Kenneth Seibert, all from Downingtown; and William Harris, Lyndell. Also, David Kochel, Lionville, joined the Navy.

The **Downingtown School Board** announced that it had hired two full-time, elementary school teachers, who would begin teaching at West Ward School in September. They were Madeline Laird of Downingtown, who would teach math, and Shirley Holly of Philadelphia, who would be the “Union room” teacher.

(Editor’s comment: As noted in the February 23, 2012 Hist-O-Gram, children of color in the first through fifth grades in the borough’s two elementary schools were all consolidated into one classroom, which was called the Union Room. In February 1950, the School Board agreed to discontinue this practice, which had begun many decades ago. That decision was made after the Downingtown Branch of the NAACP petitioned the board to stop racial segregation in the borough’s grade schools.)

Installed as officers of the **Downingtown Lions Club** were: Richard Burroughs, president; Dr. Harlan Sharp, first vice president; Charles Emery, second vice president; Herbert Bauersock, third vice president; Ralph Miller, secretary; Evans Miller, financial secretary; and Joseph Matthewson, treasurer.

Lt. Theodore R. Griffith, a Downingtown attorney, received a Bronze Star for his performance as a Combat Information Center officer on a Navy destroyer escort on a September 1944 mission.

Friends of the late **Gibson McIlvaine** of Downingtown announced plans to raise \$25,000 in order to construct a building in his memory at Camp Horseshoe, a Boy Scout camp in southern Chester County. The building would have a kitchen and dining room capable of accommodating 32 Scouts. McIlvaine was reputed to be the “father of Scouting” in the county.

Former foreign exchange student lives in Exton

Our January 24, 2012 Hist-O-Gram included a news item about the first foreign exchange student to attend DHS in 1961. We commented that it would be interesting to learn if anyone had kept in touch with a former foreign exchange student at DHS.

In response to that query, Nancy Thompson of East Brandywine informed us that Ruth Auza, who attended DHS during the 1973-74 school year, lives in Exton.

According to the DHS 1974 yearbook, Ruth found the “permissiveness of America to be in sharp contrast to the strict Catholic life in Bolivia.” And her biggest problem was getting used to the cold weather here, since the temperature in La Paz was between 55 and 65 degrees, year round. But, overall, her year at DHS was a “pleasant experience.”

In a recent telephone interview Ruth explained that she came here from La Paz, Bolivia, as an exchange student, sponsored by Rotary International. She was hosted by the Balderston, Smith and McCahon families.

Since she had attended the American School in Bolivia, Ruth said she spoke fluent English and didn’t have any language problems while attending DHS. In fact, she was a

straight A student, and West Chester State College offered her a full scholarship. However, her family wanted her to return to Bolivia, instead.

After completing her studies at a bi-lingual school in Bolivia, Ruth was an executive secretary at American firm located there, before she married her Bolivian boyfriend, Emilio Salgueiro, who was studying electrical engineering in Mexico. While living in Mexico, the Salgueiros had three children.

They moved to St. Louis, MO, when her husband got a job with Burroughs. After three years passed, they moved to Exton, when Emilio was transferred to the Burroughs plant in Tredyffrin Township, Chester County. The Salgueiros have resided in Exton for more than 26 years, and their children graduated from DHS East. All three kids now are on their own, after earning college degrees.

Meanwhile, Ruth worked for QVC in West Chester for 19 years as a translator, in customer service and in the office of the president, until she became a full-time student at West Chester University, where she was a Spanish major. She was a magna cum laude graduate in December and hopes to get a teaching job.

It's a limekiln on Quarry Road in East Caln



John Carbo is the truly perceptive scholar who was the first person to correctly identify this as a limekiln on the west side of Quarry Road, near the intersection of Boot Road in East Caln. Several people also mentioned the limekiln on Marshallton-Thorndale Road in West Bradford.

A limekiln is a furnace used to reduce naturally occurring forms of calcium carbonate, in the form of limestone, to lime. Limekilns are often constructed into a hillside so that they can be filled or charged by tipping material into the chamber through a hole in the top, which also serves as a flue.

Coming events & activities in Downingtown area

GEYA registration

Glenmoore Eagle Youth Association offers recreational soccer programs for kids from Pre-K through 12th grade, with no residency restrictions. Registration is open until February 28, with late registration open until March 15. Go to www.geyasoccer.org to register.

GEYA also offers the HIGH 5 Soccer Program for young athletes (5-19) with special needs. The program is designed to improve the overall fitness, self-esteem and social skills of each child. Registration is always open for HIGH 5 Soccer and there is no cost to participants. You can register now for the spring season, which begins in April, at www.geyasoccer.org.

GEYA is always looking for high school students to help out as "buddies" for the HIGH 5 soccer program. This service can count towards a high school graduation project. Contact Bill LaTorre at BillL@geyasoccer.org for more information.

Blood drive at Borough Hall

There will be a Red Cross Blood Drive in the Borough Hall Annex, 4 W. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown, from 2-7 PM Wednesday, February 20. Walk-ins will be accepted. For more info, call 1-800-733-2767.

DHS Alumni Assn. banquet

The banquet will be held from 5-10 PM Saturday, April 20 at Whitford Country Club. The honored guest is Ron Ditzler, former choir director from 1969 to 1977. More information can be found on the website: www.downingtowntalumni.org.

DHS West Post Prom Party

The 10th annual DHS West Post Prom Party (P3) will be held at the Lionville YMCA. All seniors are invited, and they don't have to go to the Prom to come to the Post Prom Party.

This year's theme is "Passport to the World." The YMCA will be transformed into a night filled with fun and activities, including the indoor pool, using exciting places to tour throughout the world, while providing a safe and fun environment for all. Last year's event drew over 250 seniors and their guests.

The event is coordinated and funded by parents and members of the community. All funds that are raised will be used for the event and are utilized in securing activities, games, food and prizes.

Volunteers are needed for all committees, and parents of students in all grade levels are encouraged to get involved. Please do not wait until your child is a senior to get involved. Those who wish to help are invited to join us at 7 PM at meetings being held in Room 139 at DHS West on Feb. 19, March 19, April 16 and May 14.

Please check out the P3 website: www.dwestpostprom.com for more details and to sign up as a volunteer.

Savings opportunities available at DARC

Discount Movie Tickets: \$7.50, cash only. Honored at all Regal Entertainment Group locations (Regal Cinemas, United Artists Theatres, and Edwards Theatres). Valid for all show times. There may be a \$2.50 surcharge for the first 12 days of select films or a \$2.50 surcharge for IMAX Giant Screen Theatres.

For more info/complete price list on these opportunities and upcoming programs, go to the DARC website www.darcinfo.com, or call 610-269-9260, or stop by the DARC Office (8:30 AM-4:30 PM, Monday thru Friday), 114 Bell Tavern Road Downingtown.

Banquet Room for Rent

The Downingtown (Williamson) Masonic Lodge, a non-profit organization located at 210 Manor Ave. has a Banquet Room for rent. The area is perfect for parties of up to 80 people and has a full kitchen. Rental fees are very reasonable. Call 610-269-3555 for more information.

Joseph's People, Downingtown Chapter

An ecumenical support mission to help un/underemployed people; run entirely by volunteers. We have been at St. Joseph's since 1995. Meets 7:30 PM on the 2nd & 4th Tues. of the month. All are welcome. Visit web page, www.josephspeople.org or just come to a meeting at St. Joseph's Parish Meeting Room behind the school, 460 Manor Ave., Downingtown. Call 610 873-7117. Leave Message. Leader: Cheryl Spaulding, Email: JPCheryl@verizon.net.

Hist-O-Grams are emailed weekly to members and friends of the Downingtown Area Historical Society. If you want to make a comment, add your email address to the sign-up box on the home page of our website. We won't share or sell any email addresses. Or if you want your email address deleted from the list, send an email to:

Info@downingtownareahistoricalsociety.org.